

Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson:

Jens Haugan: Old Norse Word Order and Information Structure

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Second opponent's comments

1. Main characteristics of the dissertation

Jens Haugan's dissertation, *Old Norse Word Order and Information Structure*, is a voluminous work of almost 600 pages. In many respects, it is also a good work which the author deserves credit for. Its main advantages are the following, in my view:

1. It is the first major general study of Old Norse word order within a generative framework
2. It demonstrates how the concordance to the Family Sagas (*Orðstöðulykill Íslendinga sagna*) can fruitfully be used in syntactic studies
3. It underlines the relationship between argument structure and thematic roles on one hand and syntactic structure and word order on the other
4. It utilizes theories of information structure to account for different word order patterns in Old Norse
5. It strengthens claims that have been made on the similarities between Old Norse and Modern Icelandic with respect to configurationality, oblique subjects, passive formation etc.

In spite of this, the dissertation has many serious faults. First, it is far too long. Second, the exposition is often difficult to follow and the argumentation is sloppy. Third, the basic claims are often unclear and not original. In the following, I will present arguments for these claims; but first, a few words on the sources and Haugan's use of them.

Haugan uses *Orðstöðulykill Íslendinga sagna* (Concordance to the Icelandic Family Sagas, Kristjánsdóttir et al. 1996) as his main source: "By *Old Norse* I mean the language used in the written sources from Norway and Iceland from around 1050-1350." (p. 4) Here we must remember that the oldest written sources for Icelandic are from the late twelfth century. The oldest existing fragments of saga manuscripts are from the middle of the thirteenth century, and the oldest manuscripts that the concordance is based on are from the last decade of the thirteenth century. Most of the manuscripts that the concordance is based on actually are younger than 1350. Therefore, we cannot be sure to what extent they really reflect Old Icelandic syntax. For instance, Kjartan Ottosson (2001) has recently pointed out that at least some scribes have clearly changed the word order in sagas they copied.

"I have chosen to discuss those constructions as 'authentic' examples even though this might be proved to be wrong by future research. I do not think that "possible

inaccuracies” in the corpus have any crucial effect on the argumentation of this thesis as a whole.” (p. 7)

“The Old Norse texts are traditionally handled as if they represented one homogeneous language stage. In this work, no attempt will be made to try to detect possible variations or differences between the various texts or constructions.” (p. 7)

“Even if we like to pretend that there is something like an Old Norse language, we must be aware of the fact that an Old Norse corpus, as represented by the Icelandic sagas, may reflect, at least theoretically, the language stage(s) of several hundred years ...” (p. 19)

“We can find the spelling of a more modern stage of Old Norse (mostly Old Icelandic) in almost every one of the transcriptions, but usually the copyists seemed not to have touched the word order.” (p. 19) But see Kjartan Ottosson (2001).

2. Central claims

On p. 4, Haugan lists “Some of the most central claims” in his thesis. These are the following:

1. Old Norse is a configurational language
2. Old Norse is a so-called SVO-language, SVO being the (only) basic word order
3. Old Norse has so-called oblique subjects
4. Old Norse has passive formation
5. Old Norse has Scrambling

None of these claims are new, however. I have (Rögnvaldsson 1995) brought forth several types of arguments against Faarlund’s (1990) claim that ON is non-configurational. Most linguists writing in a generative framework have argued that ON is a SVO-language; see especially Sigurðsson (1988) and Hróarsdóttir (1996, 2001). It has also been argued by, for instance, myself (Rögnvaldsson 1995) and Barðdal (2000) that ON has oblique subjects. Benediktsson (1980) showed that ON must be assumed to have syntactic passive formation, and I have also argued for that position. True, linguists have not talked much about Scrambling in ON, but it is clear that most of them have assumed that ON has extensive movement rules; see especially Sigurðsson (1988) and Hróarsdóttir (1996, 2001).

In a doctoral dissertation, one would of course like to see more innovative and original claims. Haugan has an explanation for this:

“There are first of all two different ‘traditions’ within the study of Old Norse syntax. The ‘traditional’ (Norwegian) view is based on the works of Nygaard and others ... Within this tradition, Old Norse is a language fundamentally distinct from Modern Icelandic (and Modern Norwegian). ... The other view, let us call it the ‘modern’ (Icelandic) view, looks upon Old Norse and Modern Icelandic (roughly speaking) as variants of the same language.” (p. 3)

In the preface, he says: “As a consequence of the ‘conflict’ between the traditional and the modern view, this thesis is written within the modern view, whereas it has the traditional [i.e., Norwegian] reader as its main target.” I think this is a rather unfortunate way of resolving the conflict. The result is that the author spends a lot of space arguing for claims originally made by others, without presenting many claims or arguments of his own.

I have no problems in accepting points 1, 3 and 4; in fact, I have argued for those claims in several papers. I also agree that ON has extensive movement rules, but whether some or all of them should be subsumed under the term Scrambling is a matter of discussion. As to point 2, I agree that ON is definitely not a SOV language. I have argued that it had variable base in the VP, due to an unfixed head parameter of the VP. That may or may not be right, and I am willing to reconsider that position if I see strong arguments against variable base and in favour of one single SVO base. The basic question is, then: Has Haugen managed to provide us with such arguments?

3. Arguments against variable base

I must admit that I do not find his arguments convincing. He says a number of times that he finds some analysis reasonable or not reasonable, for instance, p. 194-195: “In my opinion, assuming adjunction (Scrambling) to the left of VP, i.e. between [Spec, VP] and IP, seems to be more reasonable than operating with several ‘basic’ word orders.” p. 42: “I will conclude here that it is most reasonable to analyze Old Norse as underlyingly SVO.” Now, it is clear that it is very difficult to prove any statements or claims about the word order of a dead language like ON, and sometimes we just have to choose the possibility we find most likely among those theoretically possible. That is, sometimes we may have to use our common sense, so to speak. But that must be the last resort – only used when no empirical or theoretical arguments are sufficient to choose among the possibilities.

Haugen’s main theory is that the word order variation in the ON VP can be attributed to a rule of Scrambling. He compares this analysis with an analysis advocated by myself, which assumes a variable base phrase structure. Haugen argues that his analysis is superior to the variable base analysis, and the latter cannot account for various types of sentences actually occurring in ON. He states (p. 86n) that Scrambling is incompatible with a variable base hypothesis. The reason is that “If a language is able to base generate alternative word orders, the term Scrambling would be meaningless since Scrambling implies breaking up/reordering a certain existing word order”. However, no one has, to my knowledge, argued that we can account for **all** variation in ON word order by adopting the double base hypothesis. On p. 226, Haugen states that “...Rögnvaldsson seems to reject the hypothesis that objects may move to the left in Old Norse ...”. This is wrong. Rögnvaldsson (1996, fn. 16) says: “... I (tentatively) suggest that something related to the modern Object Shift is at stake in these examples ...”. Cf. also: “...leftward movement of pronouns and rightward movement of full NPs is well motivated ...” (section 3.5).

The question whether the great differences in ON word order should be attributed mainly to different underlying word order or to Scrambling is not easy to answer. As far as I can see, no one has come up with any conclusive evidence for one or the other solution. It is possible to use both empirical and theoretical arguments in this case. If

we believe in Kayne's proposal that all languages are underlyingly VO, then the case is closed. However, Haugan does not assume Kayne's theory.

p. 40: ... *og muntu henni gefa moturinn að bekkjargjöf*

"... there are many arguments against such an analysis [i.e., double base]. ... Either way, one has to assume transformations" (p. 40).

"If Old Norse allowed leftward movement like the Modern Scandinavian languages, there was no 'need' for two basic word orders" (p. 41). Note, however, that the leftward movement rules of ON would have to be much more extensive than those of Modern Scandinavian. Furthermore, it is tricky to refer to what a language "needs". We may well argue that many features of any particular language are "unnecessary". We may for instance ask whether all of the Scrambling processes in ON were necessary.

Another argument against variable base is the following: "Furthermore, it would not be possible to determine whether the speaker actually was using one or the other grammar in certain constructions" (p. 41). This is true, but it can by no means be considered an argument **against** double base. On the contrary; such an indeterminate grammar is a key factor in explaining the variation and how long it lasted. If the surface form of sentences allows two possible interpretations of the underlying structure, it is quite natural that speakers construct different grammars. Cf. p. 43: "This phenomenon may be explained as some kind of 'speaker's confusion', that is, it might have been difficult to analyze competing structures and even worse to reach a state of fixed parameters."

p. 42: "I will conclude here that it is most reasonable to analyze Old Norse as underlyingly SVO. ... Structures that look like 'remnants of SOV' may be explained by liberal movement rules allowing different kinds of phrases to be moved into the middle field. The choice between structures with or without such transformations seems, in most cases, to be pragmatically determined ...".

p. 94: "My main goal is to argue for a movement approach to Old Norse, and by that *against* a theory of base generation and/or non-configurationality. ... I want to show that surface structures that do not correspond to the 'result' of a default deep structure ... are best accounted for by pragmatic accommodation, i.e. (structurally) *optional* movement."

p. 41: Cites Hróarsdóttir who rejects the double base analysis for theoretical reasons and also states that "the data simply does not seem to demand such an analysis". However, note that Hróarsdóttir is not talking about ON, but rather later stages of Icelandic (cf. Rögnvaldsson 1996). Cf. also p. 212.

p. 25: "When both constructions are frequent in Old Norse, and when they, in addition, are generated by the same speaker, then it is obvious that both constructions, at this stage, still seem to carry out somehow different pragmatic functions ...". I am not sure that this is all that obvious. First, it is not clear that we can ever talk about two constructions generated by the same speaker. Remember that the sagas are not preserved in the original, and the manuscripts have been copied over and over again. Hence, it is quite possible that some of the sentences reflect the word order of the

original author, whereas other sentences reflect the language of one of the copyists. Second, it is in my view perfectly possible that two alternative word orders are used randomly, without any pragmatic difference. Haugan himself acknowledges that Stylistic Fronting does not appear to be pragmatically motivated.

209: “As an argument against a base-generation approach, my assumption is that if two word order patterns ... were equally ‘basic’, it would not be easy to know what would be the ‘trigger’ of one or the other.” The question is, then: Does there have to be a trigger? Even though we assume that the relevant parameter is unspecified, it is clear that the verb and its complement must be linearly ordered – they cannot be pronounced simultaneously. Hence, one or the other order must be chosen – and it is quite possible, in my view, that this is just a random selection in some cases. However, it is likely that there is often a pragmatic reason for preferring one order over the other.

On p. 101, Haugan shows a possible deep structure of a transitive clause with SOV-base: “I find this analysis, however, not very promising; especially not since the verb would have to move to the right (to the ‘higher’ V) before it moves to the left to I[nfl], if one wants to maintain a double VP analysis like I do in the present theory.” But if one does not assume a double VP analysis, this objection is not valid (cf. fn. 6 on p. 102: “On the other hand, the Double VP Analysis may, of course, be on the wrong track, too.”). One might also ask whether there really is anything against assuming first rightward movement and then leftward movement. Perhaps one should not talk about rightward and leftward movement at all, but rather as two movements in the same direction, i.e., higher up in the structure.

p. 101: “Alternatively, one may try to explain some SOV structures in Old Norse by assuming that it is only the head parameter of IP that is not fixed.” I don’t understand this. It is quite clear that I is (almost) always to the left of the VP in Old Norse.

Another argument against variable base is the following: “Typologically I also find it rather dubious that Old Norse should allow Extraposition or Heavy NP Shift of indirect objects when this is not a common phenomenon in the Germanic languages at all. Leftward movement is, on the other hand, attested both in Scandinavian and German” (p. 41) On the same page, we find the following: “Extraposition of pronouns or indirect objects is, for instance, not common in the languages related to Old Norse. Leftward movement into the middle field is, on the other hand, attested in several Germanic languages” (p. 41). True; but remember that Haugan must assume much more extensive leftward movement for ON than for the modern languages. He explains this movement by pragmatic demands. But if we have to admit that ON has more extensive leftward movement than the modern Germanic languages, then we can hardly argue against possible rightward movement in ON by pointing out that such movement does not occur in the modern languages.

Note that Haugan actually does not seem to think that something like a variable base is theoretically excluded. He refers to Hróarsdóttir (1996) and says: “If overt movement is due to *strong* versus *weak* features, then there might have been a period where it was difficult to determine those features, or they might have been optionally strong or weak (cf. Hróarsdóttir 1996). In this case, one may indeed speak of unspecified parameters in Old Norse” (p. 42-43) Haugen continues and says: “For

instance, take the phenomenon of discontinuous phrases; this and other variants of mixed word order types may give us reason to assume that there has been a period where it could have been difficult to fix the head parameter, as supposed by Rögnvaldsson (1996). Thus, Old Norse may have looked like a mixture of SVO and SOV ... This phenomenon may be explained as some kind of ‘speaker’s confusion’, that is, it might have been difficult to analyze competing structures and even worse to reach a state of fixed parameters” (p. 43). This is exactly what I proposed in my paper that Haugan refers to, so I don’t really understand what he means here. In what sense is this different from double base?

193-194: “From a typological view, two alternative base structures in the same sentence appear to be rather upappealing.” Why?

p. 39: “If we assume that I can appear either to the left or to the right of IP in Old Norse, or if V could govern both to the left and to the right, we would, of course, be able to generate both OV and VO.” There is absolutely no reason to believe that I is to the right of IP in ON.

Speaking about mixed word order patterns in the VP, Haugan says (p. 26): “... one may imagine that a speaker with a perhaps not very ‘safe’ SVO basic word order might be able to *produce* these word order patterns, but this also suggests that this speaker might have more serious problems with *analyzing* such patterns within the ‘new’ SVO grammar.” I should think that this was the other way around. We can understand various types of sentences that we do not use ourselves. Speakers of Modern Icelandic have no trouble understanding ON sentences with OV word order, even though such sentences have been ungrammatical in Icelandic for at least two centuries.

155: “A double base hypothesis would, thus, not be able to account for those structures.” No, not by itself, but it is clear that even if we assume double base, we also have to make use of some transformations.

“Given a double base hypothesis, or even a non-configurational approach to Old Norse word order, one would have to assume that Old Norse word order primarily correlates with pragmatic factors. According to the view advocated in this thesis, on the other hand, Old Norse word order primarily correlates with grammatical relations and other syntactic factors. However, compared to the modern Scandinavian languages Old Norse surface syntax allows a greater structural variety of accommodation to pragmatic demands or desires” (p. 87). This is, of course, rather delicate. Everybody seem to agree that pragmatics play a bigger role in ON word order than in Modern Icelandic, for instance. Whether the role of pragmatics in ON is so great that we can say that word order *primarily* correlates with pragmatic factors is a matter of taste. As Haugan himself acknowledges, “Old Norse appears also to have structures that are not necessarily pragmatically motivated, e.g. Stylistic-Fronting constructions, which are also found in Modern Icelandic” (p. 87).

“... Old Norse – despite the great word order variation – should be reckoned among those languages in which order **primarily** correlates with **grammatical relations or other syntactic factors**” (p. 87).

4. Arguments for Scrambling

What does it mean to claim that ON has Scrambling? *A priori*, one could interpret this claim in either of two ways. It could be interpreted as a descriptive term covering various types of movements in ON. Another way of interpreting Haugan's claim would be to look at Scrambling as a formally defined movement rule with some recognizable formal properties – and perhaps also functional properties.

Now, it is clear that Haugan's claim only makes sense if it is interpreted in the latter manner. This is because of Haugan's claim that SVO is the only basic word order in ON. It is quite clear that many ON sentences do not show SVO order on the surface, so if they are underlyingly SVO one is bound to assume that extensive movement rules are responsible for the surface word order. Thus, Scrambling in the first sense would be an automatic consequence of the claim on basic word order, but not a separate claim that has to be defended. However, this appears to be what Haugan means. On p. 85-86, he says: "Hence, the descriptive cover term *Scrambling*, which could be interpreted as 'alternative non-basic word order', will be sufficient in a discussion on Old Norse word order varieties." In spite of this, he says: "My intuition is that Old Norse has different kinds of Scrambling phenomena" (p. 86). Here, he seems to be talking about different rules with different properties, but not using the term Scrambling as a "descriptive cover term." However, it is not clear how to interpret this statement – what kind of differences is Haugan talking about? It is of course clear that Scrambling moves different types of elements under his analysis; but is he referring to different landing sites, different functional properties, or what?

221: "... I consider the term *Scrambling* a term covering different types of movements ..."

231: "The discussion of Scrambling of verbal particles has shown that there are at least two different Scrambling processes in Old Norse: Scrambling of maximal phrases and Scrambling of head categories. The description of Scrambling as movement to the left of VP must, therefore, be understood as adjunction to VP or possibly V, dependent on the nature of the scrambled phrase."

236: "Scrambling of a verb is definitely interesting. It is, on the other hand, not *that* frequent as we have seen. It is relatively clear that the scrambled participle (or infinitive) should be analyzed as a head category."

190: "... *Scrambling*, i.e. movement to the left of VP. The empirical evidence points into the direction that the most typical Scrambling processes in Old Norse should be analyzed as adjunction to the left of VP. However, I will not exclude the possibility that some Scrambling processes are movement to a certain functional projection like, for instance, AgrOP in a minimalist approach. ... I assume that Scrambling in Old Norse is adjunction to VP only (or, in some cases, possibly to a head position within the VP), and not also to IP as, for instance, in Modern German ..."

208: "Structurally, I assume that Scrambling in Old Norse, in most cases, can be covered by assuming adjunction to the left of VP."

208n: "The expression "Scrambling to the left of VP" is also meant to cover Scrambling of a/the verb ... Most likely, this kind of verb movement is adjunction to a

higher V-position (head movement) ... Note that considering the scrambled verb a maximal projection is not that controversial since the non-finite main verb (as a participle or infinitive) can be topicalized in Old Norse ...”

234: “The discussion on particles above, has shown that even head categories may be scrambled in Old Norse. The most interesting Scrambling process is perhaps Scrambling of a verb.”

In most studies on Scrambling, the term is restricted to movement of NPs and PPs (cf. for instance Thráinsson 2001). Haugan, on the other hand, uses the term also for movement of non-finite verbs, particles, etc. 243: “... it is also possible to scramble adjectives, for instance, the predicate complement.”

Haugan claims that Scrambling in ON is functionally motivated. That is undoubtedly true to a certain extent. However, he talks about different types of functional motivation. One may ask how plausible that is. Furthermore, we may assume that the same types of functional or pragmatic motivation are present in Modern Icelandic; and yet, MI does not have Scrambling (except for Object Shift). This indicates that some syntactic changes have occurred that prevent Scrambling in MI.

Unfortunately, Haugan does not make any serious attempt at a formal definition of Scrambling. He states repeatedly that he is using “the term Scrambling in its ‘original’ (Ross 1967) wide sense stating that two adjacent constituents can be permuted if they are clause-mates” (p. 85). But this description is both too wide and too narrow to accurately describe Haugan’s use of the term. It is too wide since it allows both for rightward and leftward movement; the term ‘permutation’ is neutral in this respect. It is too narrow since it talks about **adjacent** constituents, because Haugan often uses the term to describe movement over two or more elements. True, he mentions *long distance Scrambling* (p. 85), but the fact remains that his use of the term does not fit with Ross’.

210: “... I will use Scrambling in its ‘original’ (Ross 1967) wide sense stating that two adjacent constituents can be permuted if they are clause-mates. In the present discussion, the important point is that one constituent is moved to the left over another (or other) constituent(s) yielding an alternative word order. In the case of Old Norse, it is possible to detect functional reasons for this movement ...”

552-553: “There is apparently not one single feature that triggers Scrambling in Old Norse. In those cases where Scrambling seems to be more or less obligatory, the expression in question seems to have idiomatic character. ... Besides stylistically motivated Scrambling, the feature +/- *specific* seems to play a role in many Scrambling structures. Another important trigger of Scrambling is apparently a possible mismatch between the placement of the default sentence accent and the location of the actual focus expression, i.e. Scrambling may either be used to make accent by default possible, or Scrambling may signalize that accent by default is not appropriate.” Here, Haugan is in fact claiming that Scrambling is used because it is possible. Elements **can** be moved to the left, and this possibility is used in order to get a pragmatically more suitable word order. But in a GB framework, one would like to know why such extensive leftward movement was possible in ON but is not possible

in Modern Icelandic. However, Haugan does not mention any structural changes or other types of changes that could explain this change in word order possibilities.

226: “Example (47) is, thus, rather strong evidence for leftward movement of objects in Old Norse. Since leftward movement of objects is common in Modern Scandinavian, too, such an analysis is much less controversial than claiming rightward movement.”

215: “The most important function of leftward movement in Old Norse is, on the other hand, to move certain elements out of the *default* focus area at the end of the clause in order to focus an element that would not have been focused in the basic order ...”

229: “I claim that Scrambling in Old Norse is a device to move phrases out of the area of the default sentence accent to make accenting another phrase possible by default.”

463: “The phenomenon of Scrambling is a much debated issue in the linguistic literature and there is still much work to be done since there seem to be different Scrambling phenomena that might deserve different explanations (e.g. Scrambling versus the more restricted variant Object Shift, and Scrambling versus Stylistic Fronting).”

It has often been pointed out that in the Germanic languages, there appears to be a strong correlation between Scrambling and basic SOV word order. This is for instance evident from the table that Haugan shows on p. 222. He says: “A table like this seems to show that the difference between Object Shift and ‘general’ Scrambling may be determined by whether a language is SVO or SOV, respectively.” In a footnote, Haugan says that “If ‘general’ Scrambling is only possible in SOV languages, this would obviously be a good argument for those who want to claim an SOV basic word order for Old Norse. However, I have demonstrated several times that SOV as the only basic word order for Old Norse would lead to serious problems” (fn. 31). But noone has suggested that SOV is the **only** basic word order in ON; only that it is an alternative basic word order. Hence, it seems to me that Haugan does not present any arguments against there being a correlation between SOV and Scrambling – even though he points out in a footnote that Vikner (1997) has rejected the assumption that only SOV languages have Scrambling. Haugan mentions that since Modern Icelandic is the only Scandinavian language that has morphological case, and also the only Scandinavian language that has Object Shift of full NPs, “an explanation for the difference between Object Shift and Scrambling may possibly rather be related to Case instead of word order typology”. But then one would expect ON and MI to behave in the same manner, since the case system has not changed.

236: *Þorsteinn kvað Eystein óspilltan varning tekið hafa*

“The ‘problem’ is, first of all, that the ‘default’ analysis [of] small clauses (A.C.I.) is to assume a VP ... In this case, however, the scrambled object and the main verb would have to be adjoined to a position between the auxiliary and the subject of the small clause, which would be a rather unpleasant situation. I am not sure how to analyze an example like this, but my suggestion would be that there must be an omitted VP_{aux} ...”. – There are no reasons for assuming any omitted VP here. On the contrary; this sentence is a good argument for OV-order.

On p. 552, Haugan says: “Even though the discussion on Scrambling above has been concentrated on a limited number of constructions, the results are rather striking.” Well – maybe the results are more striking exactly **because** the discussion is concentrated on a limited number of constructions. Haugan’s figures for the frequency of certain words or constructions are sometimes misleading. On p. 537, he says for instance: “Of the nine expressions *taka við trú*, only one (!) has Scrambling.” True, but only five others **could** have scrambling. In examples (120e) and (120f) on p. 538, scrambling is not a possibility. Furthermore, there is also an example of *við trú blandast* with scrambling. On p. 526, Haugan says: “... there is no example of *drepið* and a scrambled pronoun *hann* ...”. But there are two examples of *skal hann drepa*.

On p. 535: “... there are only two examples of Scrambling of the object with *keypt*, the basic and unmarked order being:” [VO]. But one must also take notice of the word order with the infinitive *kaupa*, where we find:

- ... *ef nokkurir vilji land hennar kaupa* (Krók 1514)
- ... *að eg vil mér konu kaupa* (Krók 1531)
- ... *sagði honum sitt erindi og vildi land kaupa* (VaLjó 1830)
- ... *og vil eg það kaupa* (Hænsþ 1421)

There are 10 examples of an object following *keypt*, but 4 of them do not immediately follow the verb. – On p. 370, Haugan says: “Not very surpr[isi]ngly, there is no instance of *um sumarið á þingi* in the topic position in the corpus.” True, but *um sumarið á Alþingi* occurs twice. – On p. 149: “Since there are only three examples of Inversion (?) with *biðja* (‘beg/ask for’) out of nearly 2000, we should obviously be a little suspicious.” But in only a small part of these 2000 examples would inversion be possible anyway; most of them do not have two NP objects.

236: “Even though Scrambling of the verb is interesting, some statistics may show that this Scrambling operation is not as frequent as Scrambling of, for instance, an object.” These statistics only refer to four combinations; *hafa + drepið*, *hafa + tekið*, *vilja + taka* and *vilja + gefa*. If we look at other combinations, we get a completely different picture:

- hafa farið: 16 farið hafa: 43
- hafa sagt: 5 sagt hafa: 9
- hafa haft: 9 haft hafa: 11
- hafa gert: 17 gert hafa: 44

Haugan says that “There are approximately 303 occurrences of the participle *tekið* (‘taken’) in the corpus, but I found only nine instances of Scrambling of the participle ... when investigating the combination *tekið + hafa*.” (p. 236) This is correct, but note that there are only 10 instances of *hafa tekið* without Scrambling.

“There are, for instance, only 38 constructions with the infinitive *hafa* and the participle *tekið* and 20 with *hafa* and *drepið*.” Even though I can’t be sure, I strongly suspect that Haugan gets these numbers by searching for “hafa NEAR tekið” and “hafa NEAR drepið”. At least, I get the same numbers if I do that. However, these numbers do not show what Haugan seems to think. First, they do not show the number of constructions, but rather the number of pages where the search string occurs, and in some cases, the string can occur more than once on a single page. Worse, the search sometimes finds strings that are irrelevant in this respect. Sometimes, the *hafa* is not the infinitive but rather the 3rd person plural, as in *þeir hafa drepið yxni mitt*; and sometimes, *hafa* and *drepið* belong to two different clauses,

as in *hún leiddi þá eigi augum er vini hennar höfðu drepið* “en veit eg hverjir gert hafa”.

5. Arguments against rightward movement

Arguing against extensive rightward movement, Haugan quotes the following sentence from *Njáls saga*, p. 275:

p. 40: *Þá mátt þú nú mikið lið veita Njáli*

He says: “In this example, there is an indirect object to the right, while the direct object is located to the left, i.e. in the middle field. Within an OV analysis, this sentence would have to be analyzed by referring to *Heavy NP Shift*, i.e. Extraposition of the indirect object. According to Dikken (1995:195), on the other hand:

Indirect Objects in double object constructions consistently resist undergoing Heavy NP Shift, not just in English, but in other languages as well ...” (p. 40).

But even though this may be true for English and (Modern) Norwegian, that does not mean that it is universally valid. Since ON clearly has more movements than its descendants, it doesn’t seem implausible that it had Heavy NP Shift of indirect objects – especially since such movement is perfectly grammatical in Modern Icelandic (cf. for instance Rögnvaldsson 1990):

Ég lánaði bókina einhverjum hálfvita
‘I lent the book to some idiot’

189: “Additionally, an internal argument may be moved to the right by Heavy NP Shift or ‘Extraposition’ ... The direct object (DO) may be extraposed, whereas an indirect object can usually not be extraposed (only a possible complement of the IO could be extraposed).”

193: “As mentioned in 4.2.2 above, it seems that indirect objects are never involved in Heavy NP Shift, i.e. Extraposition to the right.”

p. 121: “... the Germanic languages usually do not allow Extraposition (Heavy NP Shift) of an indirect object.” Also on p. 154 (fn. 87) and 155.

206: “As discussed before, the indirect object is assumed not to be able to be shifted to the right. However, Extraposition in the narrow sense is possible.”

212: “... the fact that indirect objects rarely shift to the right.”

225: “Furthermore, as discussed before, Heavy NP Shift of the indirect object is not common in the Germanic languages and other languages as well.”

Haugan repeatedly claims that rightward movement of the subject is extremely limited in Old Icelandic. Here are some quotes: “If we presuppose that the subject cannot be extraposed ...” (p. 116); “... given the assumption that the subject (usually) cannot be extraposed ...” (p. 118); “Otherwise, one would have to claim that the subject is extraposed, which would not be an attractive assumption ...” (p. 119); “Since Extraposition of the subject is not considered an alternative ...” (p. 120); “... given the assumption that Extraposition of subjects is not allowed – or at least very restricted ...” (p. 121); “Given the assumption that Extraposition of subjects is not allowed – or at least very restricted ...” (p. 122). However, he admits (p. 308) that

“subjects may apparently be shifted to the right in Old Norse in certain cases.” And on p. 166-167, he says: “Since *Heavy Subject Shift* not only applies to ‘heavy’ subjects alone (if this is a criterion at all – see below), but first of all to non-topical subjects (at least in Old Norse and Modern Icelandic), the term *Subject Shift* as opposed to *Object Shift* – see below) may seem more appropriate when discussing movement of the subject to the right.” I cannot find any arguments that would support the claim that Heavy Subject Shift or Subject Extraposition is not allowed or very rare in Old Icelandic. It seems to be only an unfounded assumption. Notice that Subject Shift is perfectly grammatical in Modern Icelandic.

489: Right dislocated subjects: “... the phenomenon in question is not a very frequent construction in Old Norse.”

Haugan quotes the following sentence from *Gísla saga* (p. 175):

Nú mælti það allur múgur að þeir kváðust til konungs vilja yfir sér þann er líkastur væri Haraldri ...

He claims that the most likely analysis of this sentence is to assume scrambling of the direct object, *það*, following an extraposition of the *að*-clause. The subject *allur múgur*, then, is assumed to stay in its base-generated position, in Spec-VP. He says that “... Scrambling can be functionally motivated, ... and the subject ‘to the right’ in this construction also behaves differently from a typical ‘subject-shifted’ subject discussed in the previous subsection. Hence, there would be no functional motivation for extraposing the subject ...” (p. 177). Note, however, that such sentences are perfectly grammatical in Modern Icelandic, even though Modern Icelandic is not assumed to have Scrambling. Hence, one may wonder whether the subject is not extraposed after all. 175: “It seems that another analysis would be more likely: the demonstrative *það* (the direct object) is moved to the left by *Scrambling* ... Probably, the *það* is accented.” I don’t think so.

175: “... I assume that only one phrase can be *extraposed*, i.e. one can (normally) only have either *Extraposition*, *Subject Shift* or *Heavy-NP-Shift* (all these movements being instances of Extraposition in a broad sense).” As far as I can see, this is just an assumption, not supported by any empirical or theoretical evidence. Note that in Modern Icelandic, it appears that two phrases can be moved to the right in the same clause:

Það hafa sagt mér margir þessa sögu.

Thus, Haugan’s claim that “A double base analysis without the possibility of Scrambling would probably not be able to explain the structure at all ...” (p. 175) may not be correct. Furthermore, it must be pointed out that noone has advocated such an analysis.

170: “Since Subject Shift is not possible in Modern Norwegian, and since Extraposition of the indirect object ... is ungrammatical in most Germanic languages too ..., Subject Shift is obviously a ‘problematic’ construction in many ways.”

177: “Note that both object movement to the left (Object Shift) and Extraposition of *that*-clauses is attested in Modern Scandinavian whereas movement of the subject to the right is only attested in very limited constructions in Modern Icelandic (if those constructions are due to movement at all ...).”

187-188: NP, VP: “This is a construction where the syntactic status of the Agent (subject? appears to be a little unclear. The ‘subject?’ is often a complex phrase, but it is not obvious that ‘heaviness’ can explain the right ‘dislocation’. Rather the word order can functionally be explained by the demands of information structure: the subject is the only argument carrying new information. ... There are reasons to believe that the Agent phrase might be base-generated as a so-called *argument adjunct* (Grimshaw 1990).”

506-507: “... one question would ... be whether the Agent could be analyzed as an adjunct rather than an argument. Formally, this is imaginable if one assumes that the subject position is filled by (quasi-argumental) *pro*. This quasi-argumental *pro* would, in this case, have to be capable of receiving the external role with otherwise would have to be assigned to the proper Agent. If the Agent is adjoined to the right in the same way as an Agent-phrase (*by*-phrase), it cannot receive the theta role designated for it, but it would still be possible to associate it semantically with the subject position.”

491: “My investigation is not conclusive in so far as I am not sure whether the assumption that the RDS could be considered an adjunct or an argument-adjunct holds.”

498: *Hann gaf Brandi gripi þá sem honum hafði gefið Jón Grikklandskonungur.* “It would probably be rather dubious to claim that *honum* in (49) is the syntactic subject of an active sentence with a right dislocated NP *Jón Grikklandskonungur*. On the other hand, it is not obvious that *Jón Grikklandskonungur* (alone) has status as the subject of the clause ... If we assume that the active version of *gefa* (‘give’) has to assign an Agent role, while the actual Agent candidate has been deprived of his argument status, we could imagine that the Agent role is assigned to a ‘quasi argument’, i.e. *pro*, which in turn may be linked to the ‘dislocated’ phrase.”

6. Errors

p. 116-117: “I assume that the Old Norse verb *gróa* can project a maximal thematic configuration with three potential argument positions (cf. the double VP).” Note that *sára sinna* is hardly an argument of *gróa*; it is rather an adverbial. We also find *heill sára sinna* and *batnar sára sinna*.

p. 119: *Skógi var vaxið allt um hlíðir og grænar brekkur: allt* is not the subject here; rather, it is an adverbial meaning ‘everywhere’. The sentence has no (overt) subject. Cf. also: *Var þar þá víða skógi vaxið* (LjósC 1670); *en þar var víða vaxið skógur* (GíslL 978); *nú er þar hrísi vaxið um alla þá hæð* (Dropl 358); *var þar vaxið þangi stóru* (Fljót 679); *þá var víða skógum vaxið* (GíslS 683). Cf.: *Þar var fallegt*.

317n, fn. 75: ... *og til þess nú er komið sögunni* (Svarf 1797)

“Here we find an adverbial in front of the finite verb, but behind a topicalized PP. There seem to be two elements in topic position, i.e. the V2 criterion is apparently violated:” No, because *til þess* is here a subordinating conjunction, not a topicalized PP.

317n, fn. 75: “Note that *sögunni* is dative and not nominative like potential Agents (this fact could also make it possible to analyze *sögunni* as an adverbial phrase):” But see p. 328n, fn. 93: “... *sögunni* clearly must be the subject of *komið* (there being no other argument available and no reasonable ‘understood’ Agent, either) ...”

334: [*Hallur af Síðu*]_i *stóð upp og kvaddi* [*sér*]_i *hljóðs og fékkst* _____i *þegar* “... *fást* is not supposed to be able to associate with an agentive role.” But it doesn’t; the analysis of this sentence is wrong. The “gap” does not refer to *Hallur af Síðu* but rather to *hljóðs* (which in this case means ‘silence’, not ‘sound’).

334: *Húsfreyja bað þá vita hvað af Gretti yrði en það fékkst* ____ *ekki af þeim* “The Beneficiary subject may obviously be omitted since it is co-referential with *húsfrey[j]a*, the subject of the preceding clause.” Fn: “It may also be possible to argue that *það* is the subject and that there is no Beneficiary at all. However, in this particular example (and the next), I do not think such an interpretation is very likely.”

334-335: “The ergative verb *fást* takes a dative (Beneficiary) subject ...”

335: ... *og fékkst* ____ *þó engi forstaða af lítilmennsku föður hennar*
Here, *engi forstaða* is probably the subject.

351: “... it would seem more reasonable to analyze *trölfi líkur* as one word ...”

450-451: Contrary to what Haugan says, it is quite clear that in *á þykir mér vera skuggi nokkur manningum*, *á* is a preposition.

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